

Easy Access and
Search for Education



EASE Campaign Delivers Insight to Improve Online Search for Educators

Introduction

The Learning Resource Metadata Initiative (LRMI) is working to make it easier to publish, discover, and deliver quality educational resources on the web. Led by the Association of Educational Publishers and Creative Commons, and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the LRMI has developed a common metadata framework for describing or “tagging” learning resources on the web. This framework is a key first step in developing a richer, more fruitful search experience for educators and learners.

Educators comment on search

EASE campaign comments echo key findings among educators from the LRMI Survey Report: July 2012.



72.6%

of educators surveyed reported that they search online for instructional resources at least several times a week, but only one in four (**24.6%**) described these searches as "usually successful."



are frustrated with **too many irrelevant results.**



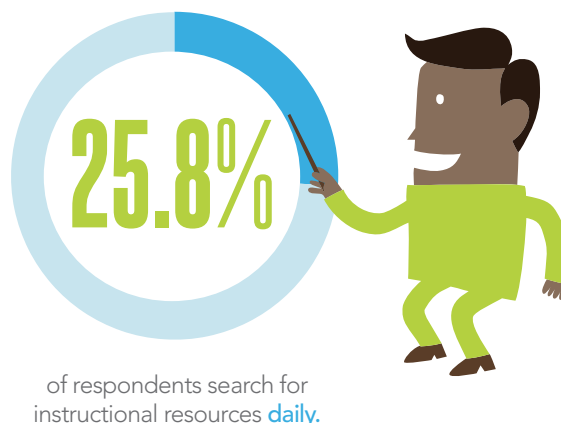
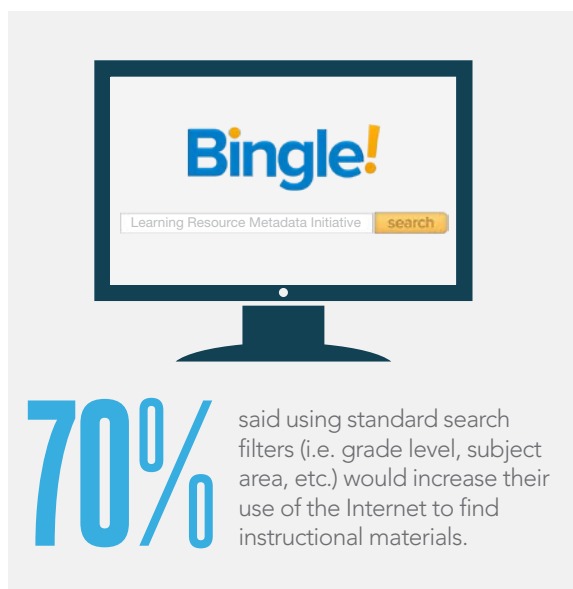
consider search **too time consuming.**



want more **education-specific details about their search results** (i.e. grade level, cost, alignments).



agree that search would be **more satisfying if it offered more education-specific filters.**



of respondents search for instructional resources **daily.**

To learn more about the 2012 survey visit:

www.lrmi.net/educators-and-publishers-want-improved-online-search-for-learning-resources.

Gathering Educator Opinions around Search Efforts for Online Resources

In the spring of 2012, the Association of Educational Publishers (AEP) conducted a survey regarding educators' and educational publishers' perceptions of online search. Educator respondents included classroom teachers, library media specialists, technology and media specialists, academic department chairs, and administrators. Nearly three in four educators (72.6%) reported that they search online for instructional resources at least several times a week, but only one in four (24.6%) described these searches as "usually successful." Furthermore, nearly two in three respondents voiced these frustrations: "too many irrelevant results" (66%) and "too time consuming" (63%).

The findings from this survey were useful in determining the overall sentiment and practices around search, but lacked information about educators' specific needs around discoverability of online learning resources and the classroom implications. Then, in October of 2012, LRMI deployed the Easy Access and Search for Education (EASE) awareness campaign—a national online initiative to provide educators with a platform to openly voice their concerns, frustrations, and suggestions around online search. The EASE campaign was conducted from October 1st through October 31st, and consisted of email, online advertising and PR outreach efforts to gather educator comments. Educators who submitted comments were entered to win one of five \$25 Amazon gift cards awarded each week during the campaign. The EASE campaign produced roughly 100 educator responses, and thousands of other educators became more aware of the LRMI and its goals for improving online search for educational resources.

The educator suggestions collected during the EASE initiative are intended to complement the earlier survey in an effort to better inform the LRMI, and to give educational resource providers direct insight into how educators search and how to leverage the LRMI metatagging framework.

Educators on Search: Experiences, Frustrations, and Suggestions

Typically, EASE respondents are using online search not only to find relevant classroom materials for lesson planning, but also to find credible professional development opportunities and to assist students with online research. These educators noted that there are "too many redundant and non-relevant answers" when using common search engines to locate online resources. Some respondents noted that the "Advanced Search" feature on Google aided in content filtration, but still did not adequately sort results by desired criteria.

Overall, educators' frustrations centered on the difficulty of finding materials pertinent to their particular needs among an estimated 10 billion currently indexed web pages.

"In internet searching, the frustrations are often the same—good search terms deliver so many unrelated hits that students give up before getting to the best sites. It is frustrating when you enter a 'good search term' and you still get results that are WAY off target." – Cathy E.

“Too much! There is such an overload that many teachers don’t know where to go and what to use.” – Gina G.

Educator respondents stated that better filters on results would save time and provide more effective search. Several commonalities emerged among the search needs identified by educator respondents, including the ability to:

- Group results by grade or age level
- Get search results aligned to specific standards
- Rate resources for quality or appropriateness
- Sort search results by topic or category
- Receive additional context around resource use

“Not only are the results overwhelming, but some are written in a language way beyond the reading level of my students. So not only would it be great to have the search become more relevant, but also reader friendly.” – Kathy H.

“I spend many hours looking for engaging lessons and standards-based assessment items. I would love to be able to search for these by standard instead of keyword so that results are more relevant.” – Colleen W.

“It would be wonderful if search results could be delivered by topic or category. Also if there was a way that search results would be marked with a type of reliability label [that would be ideal].” – Holly L.

EASE respondents also noted the value of a ranking system that allowed educators to “rate” or “like” online resources to provide context and quick reference around value and usefulness of resources.

“I would love a feature like Google Reviews, where you can see others’ reviews right in the search, with the review criteria based on educational relevance.” – Stacy O.

“It would be great if teachers could click to ‘like’ the resources to spread the word.” – Ann Marie P.

“A rating system is needed for resources so we can know what is really good and what is a waste of time.” – Kathy R.

Conclusion

The need for improved online search for instructional resources is abundantly clear. The work of the LRMI will ideally help alleviate the pain points mentioned in this report by creating a uniform metadata tagging system for content publishers so that resources will become “more discoverable” and relevant and educators and their students will enjoy productive, powerful search experiences and results.

To learn more about the LRMI visit: www.lrmi.net



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